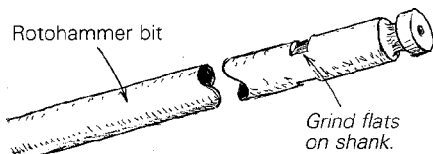


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Backing out bits

Rotohammer bits can get stuck occasionally, especially in soft, fast-drilling material. While the proper practice is to stop and clear the hole from time to time, a bit will inevitably get jammed anyway. To cope with the stuck bit, we now grind flats on the upper shanks of all our Rotohammer bits, as shown in the drawing. This



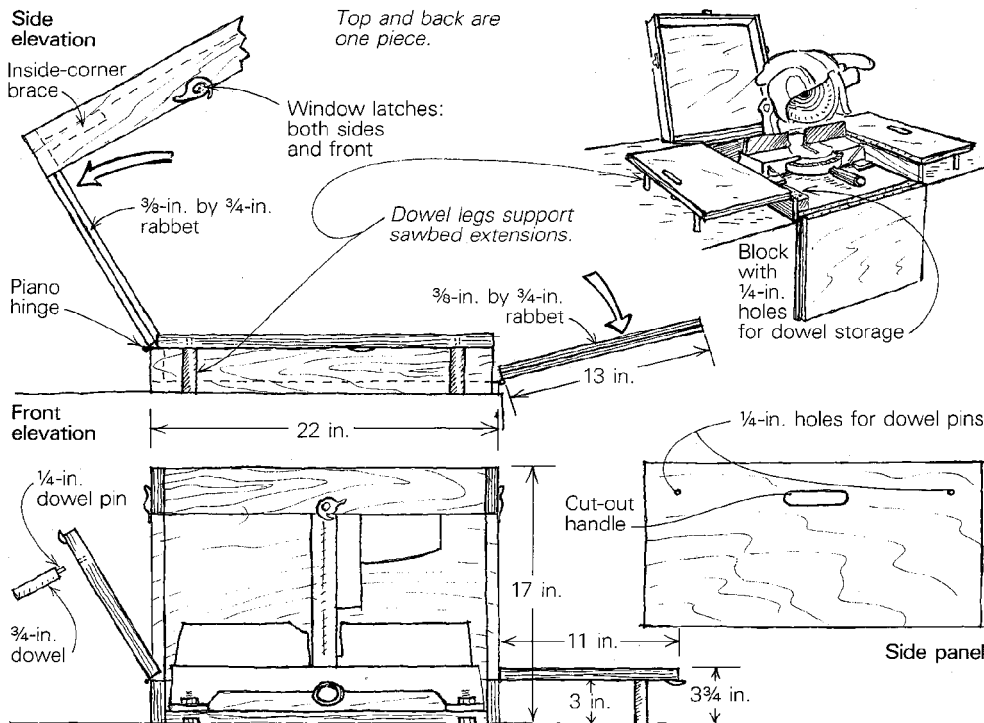
gives us a point of purchase for a crescent wrench when it comes time to back out a bit.

—Bill Pensar, Lemon Grove, Calif.

Chop-saw box

The motorized miter saw is a great tool, but it does have some drawbacks—its protrusions make it awkward to carry and its bed is often too short to accommodate the work at hand. I finally built a carrying case for my Makita that solves both problems for me.

My carrying case is shown in the drawing below. It's made of 3/4-in. birch plywood, and it measures 22 in. square by 17 in. high. Its sides, front and back are all attached to the base with piano hinges. When folded away from the saw, the back becomes a dust deflector and the sides turn into sawbed extensions. The extensions rest on 3/4-in. dowel legs, which store inside the box for transport. The 1/4-in. dowel pin recessed into each leg fits snugly into a 1/4-in. hole drilled



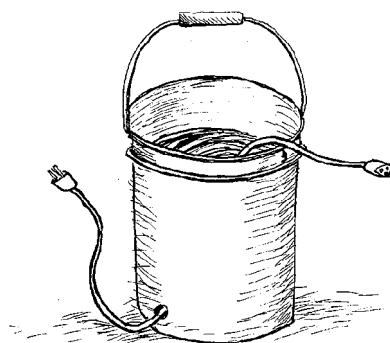
in the exterior faces of the side panels when they are being used as table extensions.

When the sides are up and the lid is in place, the box is held together by window latches on the sides and front. Altogether, the box weighs approximately 20 lb. I gladly carry the extra weight, knowing that I will have a good work surface wherever I go.

—Ron Austin, Park Ridge, Ill.

Extension-cord garage

The most convenient way that I've found to deal with unruly extension cords, especially if you move your work stations around, is to carry them in an old joint-compound bucket. As shown in the drawing below, I cut a hole near

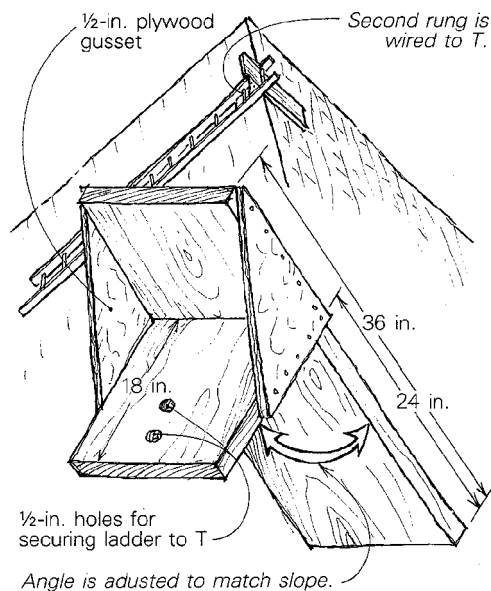


the bottom of the bucket to accommodate the prong end of the cord. In addition to holding a long cord, there's plenty of room in there to carry a couple of power tools as well.

—Bryan Humphrey, Denver, Colo.

Ridge-hung ladder

When we have to work on a steep pitch where nailed-on footholds are impractical, such as metal or fiberglass roofs, we like to stand on a ladder that hangs from the ridge. The top rung of the ladder slips over a wooden T-shaped



piece, as shown in the drawing above. The T is made of two pieces of 2x12 joined with 16d nails and braced with 1/2-in. plywood gussets. The angle of the T should be adjusted to match the slope of the roof.

When we use this rig, we wire the second rung of the ladder to the T. This helps to keep everything parallel to the roof slope. We've found this arrangement to be very stable, and the ladder and its T can easily be moved along the ridge. For a no-scratch model for metal roofs, line the inside of the T and the rails of the ladder with glued-on carpet.

—Jim Greenfield, Golden, Colo.

Caulk-tube nozzles

I've been a siding contractor for ten years, and I'm continually confronted with two conditions that are difficult to caulk properly. One is when I have to get a good bead of caulk along the trim over a door or window that is close to a soffit—there isn't enough room for the caulking gun. In this situation, I tape a 6-in. length of 3/8-in. ID vinyl tubing to the caulk-tube tip. I use duct tape for this because it's strong enough to resist the pressure of the caulk as it's forced out of the tube. The flexible vinyl tubing can be bent into the right position with one hand, while I work the gun with the other.

The other problem is caulking around meter boxes that are too close together to allow the tube between them. In this case, I attach a plastic drinking straw to the end of the tube with duct tape. The straws are rigid, and long enough to place the caulk where I want it.

—Bill Bugajski, Chicago, Ill.

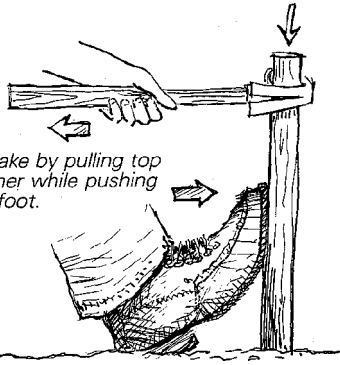
Timber moving

If your building project calls for moving large timbers over rough ground, lay your hands on some 55-gal. oil drums. They make great rollers on uneven surfaces.

—Jim Sergeant, Bainbridge Island, Wash.

Save your hands

Many times I've seen beginners holding onto a stake for dear life wondering if the person wielding the sledge will miss, pounding fingers



Position stake by pulling top with hammer while pushing base with foot.

instead. This scene can be avoided if the stake holder places his foot at the bottom of the stake, heel to the ground and toe against the stake. At the same time, the holder pulls the top of the stake as shown, using a hammer claw to grip it. This works well with wood, metal or round stakes.

—Chris R. Thyrring, Halcyon, Calif.

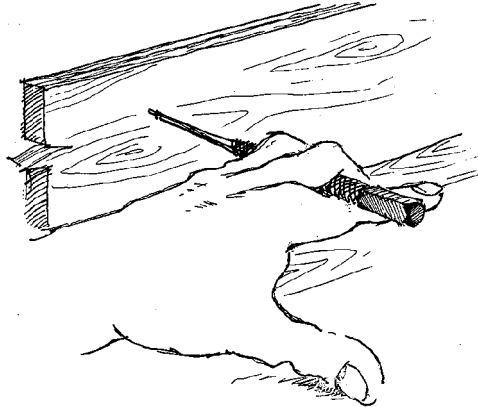
Easy-tie lumber flag

Whenever I have to carry lumber that extends beyond the bed of my pickup, I just tie on my Velcro flag. I knot one corner of a red bandana around a strip of Velcro about 1 ft. long, and then tighten the Velcro around a projecting stick of lumber. This is easier than driving a nail into the lumber or tying a string around it to hold the flag, and the Velcro hangs on tight—even at highway speeds.

—Tom Richards, Dorset, Vt.

Nailset angle

In the course of my work I have to install baseboards from time to time, and I've found that



holding the nailset in the manner shown in the drawing above allows me the stability that's necessary for accurate nailing. I wrap two fingers over and two under the set, and I place my weight either on my fingertips and my thumb, or on the heel of my hand.

—Harry Muruaga, Fayetteville, Ark.

Stud-wall adjustments

I usually put the plywood sheathing on my exterior stud walls before I raise them into position. However, once the wall has been raised it often

takes four hands to move it around, and it can be quite awkward to maneuver the bottom plate toward the layout line. Here's a clever way to handle this problem that I learned from some production carpenters.

While the wall is lying on the subfloor and before the plywood is applied, toenail the bottom plate to its layout line with 16d nails, as shown in the drawing below. As the wall is raised, these nails will bend and lift out of the floor. These are your handles. Using your hammer as a lever, you can pull the wall inward to align it. Nail it home, then nip off the bent nails with your side cutters.

—Tom Strong, Westcliffe, Colo.

